

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LIBREV 00694 220835Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

HA-05 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /078 W

-----080876 221356Z /43

R 211540Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 757

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIBREVILLE 0694

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PDEV, ECON

SUBJ: PRESIDENT BONGO'S RENOVATION DAY SPEECH

REF: LIBREVILLE 635

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT BONGO'S RENOVATION DAY ADDRESS REITERATED AND REINFORCED FAMILIAR THEMES, PARTICULARLY HIS AUSTERITY PUSH. IT WAS UNEMOTIONAL AND CONTAINED NO STARTLING REVELATIONS. THE TRANSGABON RAILWAY, SOGACEL AND AGRICULTURE CONTINUE TO BE IDENTIFIED AS DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES. BONGO RESURRECTED SOME OF THE THEMES OF HIS 1976 RENOVATION DAY CALLING FOR DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSIVISM TO WIPE OUT UNCONTROLLED CAPITALISM AND PROFITEERING FOREIGNERS BUT NOT WITH SUFFICIENT PASSION TO PANIS THE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY. HE ALSO PROMISED TO REFORM THE PARTY. END SUMMARY.

1. PRESIDENT BONGO'S SPEECH ON RENOVATION DAY, MARCH 12, THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS FOUNDING OF THE GABONESE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, WAS LARGELY A REPETITION OF PREVIOUSLY EXPOUNDED THEMES AND STATEMENTS WITH THE ACCENT ON AUSTERITY. BONGO BEGAN BY INVENTORYING THE SITUATION IN GABON WHEN HE CAME TO POWER DECEMBER 3, 1968:

A. A DISORGANIZED NATION WITHOUT SPIRIT OR PRIDE.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LIBREV 00694 220835Z

B. A CLIMATE OF DISTRUST AND UNCERTAINTY SO DEEP EVEN FAMILIES WERE DIVIDED.

C. LACK OF NATIONAL UNITY UNDER THE MULTI-PARTY POLITICAL SYSTEM PERMITTED BY PRESIDENT MBE.

D. A COUNTRY GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVIDED WITHOUT MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND WHICH THEREBY EXACERBATED TRIBAL AND REGIONAL DIFFERENCES.

E. A COLONIAL EXPERIENCE WHICH HAD REINFORCED ALL GABON'S DEBILITATING CHARACTERISTICS.

F. A LATENT THREAT OF CIVIL WAR BECAUSE OF ALL THE FOREGOING AS DEMONSTRATED PREVIOUSLY BY ONE ATTEMPTED COUP D'ETAT.

2. THE NEW PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE WAS "RENOVATION" DEFINED AS TRANSFORMATION OF STRUCTURES AND MENTALITIES, IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY AND IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE GABONESE SPIRIT. IN SHORT DISSOLUTION OF EXISTING POLITICAL PARTIES AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GABONESE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDG). RENOVATION HAS HELPED GABON TO ACCOMPLISH MUCH, BONGO ASSERTED, BUT THERE IS MUCH STILL TO BE DONE.

3. THE THEME OF "DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSIVISM," FIRST INTRODUCED IN BONGO'S 1976 RENOVATION DAY ADDRESS, BY ALL ACCOUNTS HIS MOST "RADICAL", WAS REVIVED. DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSIVISM HAD BEEN INSTITUTED, HE SAID, BECAUSE OF PROFITEERING FOREIGN MONOPOLIES WHICH DID NOT TAKE GABON'S REAL INTERESTS INTO ACCOUNT. PARTY VIGILANCE HAD IMPROVED THE PREVIOUS SITUATION BUT THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.

4. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, BONGO DECLARED, MUST CONCENTRATE OR REPLENISHABLE RESOURCES SUCH AS TIMEBER. TO THIS END, HE SAID, GABON HAS GIVEN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY TO INSTALLATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 LIBREV 00694 220835Z

AND COMPLETION OF THE CELLULOSE FACTORY (SOGACEL) AS WELL AS THE TRANSGABON RAILWAY. THESE TWO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, ALONG WITH A RENEWED EFFORT IN AGRICULTURE TO OVERCOME THE DISPARITIES BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, WOULD CONTINUE TO BE GABON'S MOST URGENT PRIORITIES. HE PROMISED THAT THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WILL BE MORE STRICTLY SUPERVISED TO AVOID EXCESSIVE ESPENDITURES INCURRED IN PAST BY LACK OF TIGHT CONTROL. BECAUSE OF PAST OVER EXPENDITURES, HE SAID, LESS URGENT AND LESS IMPORTANT PROJECTS WILL BE SHELVED FOR THE TIME BEING.

5. BONGO THEN TURNED TO NORTH-SOUTH ECONOMIC PREOCCUPATIONS. THE INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES, HE CHARGED, ARE INTERESTED ONLY IN SELLING THEIR PRODUCTS AT EVER HIGHER PRICES. THEY MUST ALLOW THE UNINDUSTRIALIZED TO DEVELOP AND THEY MUST BE PREPARED TO REFINANCE THE PUBLIC DEBTS OF THE DEVELOPING STATES. SWEDEN'S EXAMPLE OF CANCELLING SOME DEBTS OF THE ELAST ADVANTAGED STATES WAS AN EXAMPLE FOR BOTH CAPITALIST, AND SOCIALIST STATES. BONGO CHASTISED THE GOVERNMENTS OF BOTH THE WEST AND THE EAST AS BEING "ACCOMPLICES" WITH THE MULTINATIONALS IN GOUGING THE UNDERDEVELOPED WORLD.

6. FOLLOWING THIS SHOT, HOWEVER, BONGO WENT ON TO SAY THAT NO COUNTRY HAD EVER DEVELOPED WITHOUT CONTRACTING DEBTS AND WITHOUT FOREIGN LOANS. "WITH THE AID OF OUR TRADITIONAL PARTNERS AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF CERTAIN LARGE INTERNATIONAL BANKS," HE SAID, SOLUTIONS WILL BE FOUND WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO GIVE THE GABONESE ECONOMY THE BOOST IT NOW NEEDS. GABON'S AUSTERITY PROGRAM, BONGO PROMISED, WILL BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO, ALL DEBTS WILL BE HONORED AND THE TRANSGABON AND SOGACEL WILL PROCEED.

7. REFERRING TO THE RAPID PACE OF DEVELOPMENT OVER THE LAST YEARS, THE INFLATION FROM THE "NORTH", THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 LIBREV 00694 220835Z

SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN IMPORTS INCLUDING OF FOODSTUFFS WHICH MANACE GABON'S DEVELOPMENT EFFORT, BONGO RECAPITULATED THE PRINCIPAL MEASURES OF THE AUTHORITY PROGRAM. WAGES AND PRICES HAD TO BE FROZEN TEMPORARILY. EXPENDITURES WOULD BE MORE STRICTLY CONTROLLED AND WASTE ELIMINATED. THOSE WHO DIVERT STATE FUNDS WILL BE PUNISHED SEVERELY. TO MAKE HIS POINT BONGO STATED THE PERSONAL PROPERTIES OF SOME GUILTY PARTIES ALREADY HAVE BEEN CONFISCATED AND HE REFERRED TO RECENTLY INSTITUTED ANTI-CORRUPTION REGULATIONS.

8. BONGO THEN SET OUT THE REASONS FOR GABON'S INDEBTEDNESS AND THEREFORE THE NEED FOR AN AUSTERITY PROGRAM:

- A. RAPID CONSTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS NOT PROVIDED DURING COLONIAL PERIOD SUCH AS PORT OF OWENDO, ROADS AND BRIDGES.
- B. MAJOR PROJECTS IN PROGRESS SUCH AS TRANSGABON RR AND SOGACEL.
- C. FINANCING NECESSARY TO CREATE AIR GABON.
- D. DEBTS INHERITED FROM COLONIAL PERIOD.
- E. UNDERTAKING OF CERTAIN NON-VIABLE PROJECTS BECAUSE OF LACK OF CADRES OR BAD ADVICE OF "FALSE FRIENDS."
- F. OVERCOMMITMENT IN SHORT TERM DEBTS SOME WHICH WERE NOT PROPERLY NEGOTIATED AND OTHER MERELY ILL ADVISED.
- G. REVERSAL OF TERMS OF TRADE WITH EXPORTS STABILIZED AT 1973 LEVEL AND IMPORTS INCREASING RAPIDLY.
- H. THE DECLINE IN THE VALUE OF THE DOLLAR AND THE FRENCH FRANC.

9. BONGO THEN EXPRESSED HIS ADMIRATION FOR THE WAY THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND PRC WORK "EVEN IF ONE DOES NOT AGREE WITH ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR POLITICS." HE IMploRED THE GABONESE PEOPLE TO WORK HARD TOWARD NATIONAL UNITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 05 LIBREV 00694 220835Z

AND ROOT OUT TRIBALISM, REGIONALISM AND EGOISM.
HE CRITICIZED THE PDG FOR NOT HAVING DONE ENOUGH,
EXPECIALLY THE CENTRAL COMMITTE, WHICH HE ACCUSED
OF LETHARGY. TO RECTIFY THIS, BONGO ANNOUNCED
PLANS TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL COMMITTE TO REDEFINE
PARTY STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS. HE PROMISED NEW
REFORMS, NEW PROGRAMS AND NEW MEN. THE PARTY MUST,
BONGO EXHORTED, ROOT OUT CORRUPTION, INCOMPETENTS,
AND ABSENTEES IN BOTH GOVERNMENT AND LARGE ENTERPRISES. YATES

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LIBREV00694
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780126-0339
Format: TEL
From: LIBREVILLE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780343/aaaabkim.tel
Line Count: 184
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: bdd260c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 LIBREVILLE 635
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3258068
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT BONGO'S RENOVATION DAY SPEECH
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, ECON, GB, (BONGO, EL HADJ OMAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/bdd260c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014